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SUBJECT: ACADEMIA SINICA PRESIDENT LAMENTS TAIWAN'S LAGGING  
GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

REF: TAIPEI 03782

**11. SUMMARY.** Eight months into his term as Academia Sinica President, Wong Chi-huey is concerned about the inability of Taiwan to attract research talent from overseas and the disconnect between research and the legal infrastructure that is stifling development of Taiwan's scientific potential. He said Taiwan's two main high-tech advantages, biotech and digital display need a boost in order to be competitive in today's world. Academia Sinica has a wealth of areas that could be shared with the rest of the world, notably history, the Chinese classics, biotech research but lately much of the organizations' focus has been local, not international. A legal framework and government policies more in tune with the academic world would be necessary to encourage a more global engagement. Wong is working to identify areas within Academia Sinica that would benefit from such an approach.

END SUMMARY

REVERSING BRAIN DRAIN

**12. AIT ESTH** officer called on Academia Sinica President Wong Chi-huey on May 10. Since Wong took over from Lee Yuan-tseh a little over eight months ago, he has carefully crafted a new image at Academia Sinica. Gone are the occasional comments on the political scene that sometimes bedeviled his predecessor. Instead, Wong is focused on reversing the brain drain which he sees as a serious problem for Taiwan's scientific community. Wong said Taiwan suffers from one of the highest rates of non-return for students going overseas: 78 percent versus 22 percent for the PRC and 2 percent for Japan. He says Taiwan's poor academic and political environment does not attract potential returnees after their studies overseas. Wong also noted that research at institutions for higher learning was hurt by the small science budget allocated to them. He said Academia Sinica takes 10 percent of the central science budget, far higher than for universities. Wong is seeking to transfer some of that budget to the universities.

INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENCOURAGE BIOTECH DEVELOPMENT

**14.** Wong believes that Taiwan's future science potential lies in biotechnology and information technology. Citing biotechnology as one area where Taiwan has potential but lacks both the right incentives and legal framework to encourage development, Wong said the government sees only short-term gains but not long-term potential. A case in point is the low value the market places on stocks from companies that have long-lead times developing new products, such as biotech and drug companies. The market favors

companies with short lead times such as the electronics industry according to Wong. In order to encourage R&D, IPR protection needs to be strengthened, because without legal protection, nascent knowledge-based industries will not have a chance to survive. He criticized the top-down policy approach of the bureaucracy which enacts regulations without considering the opinions of academia or society. One example he cited is the government's policy on carbon dioxide emissions. It has set no target on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and has not consulted researchers in academia to formulate a sound policy. Instead it continues to enact half-way measures to placate industry. Educating policy makers to coordinate policy with academic experts will take time and effort said Wong, suggesting holding symposiums to bring bureaucrats and researchers and NGOs together.

#### STRONG HUMANITIES POTENTIAL

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¶5. Wong cited Academia Sinica's strong humanities research particularly in the area of Chinese history. He mentioned that Ming-Ching history (14th-19th century AD) is the academy's forte, recognized even by PRC academics. Taiwan's edge in this field is strengthened because it continues to use traditional characters (compatible with old historical texts) which allows researchers greater comprehension. Because of growing international interest in Chinese history and culture, he cited the digitization of the Palace Museum's archives as an example of how Taiwan's wealth of archival material (historical and cultural) could be disseminated around the world. While ESTH officer spoke with him, Wong introduced a representative of the publishing industry who was preparing a digital encyclopedia of Taiwan (Note: this

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project is being chaired by Wong's predecessor Lee Yuan-tseh.  
(End Note).

#### A GLOBAL VIEW VERSUS LOCAL FOCUS

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¶6. Wong lamented that the academic world in Taiwan is too focused on its own backyard and lacks a global view. One way to become more engaged globally was to participate in joint research projects with other countries. He was hopeful that Academia Sinica could consider funding from overseas organizations as a means to expand the scope of its research. He recently obtained a \$10 million grant from the Bill Gates Foundation for an AIDS vaccine research project and hoped to build more partnerships with U.S. institutions. However, with decreasing numbers of foreign-trained scientists returning to Taiwan, Wong felt the valuable connections and global view that are so important for the research community here would gradually be lost and be focused locally.

#### NO COMPROMISE ON TAIWAN'S IDENTITY

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¶7. In closing, Wong complained that the PRC continues to pressure organizers of scientific conferences to label Taiwan's academic contributions under the term "Taiwan, China." He said that Taiwan's participation in the global scientific community should not be subject to the dictates of the PRC.

(Note: Wong's comment comes as the PRC pushes for a resolution at the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) meetings to change Taiwan's name from the current term "Taipei China" to "Taiwan, China." End Note.)

YOUNG